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ABSTRACT

A laboratory experiment, using videotape, was designed to test the self-interest hypothesis, that is, that a subject will increase his effectiveness if he argues in favor of a position that is opposed to his best interests. Four hundred fifty-nine subjects participated in a Solomon Four-Group design for primary data acquisition. Strong opinion change main effects were obtained in support of the self-interest hypothesis, but not for source-audience similarity predictions. In terms of credibility and likability ratings, main effects were observed for source-audience similarity, and it was found that there were no significant interactions. (CH)

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EFFECTS OF SOURCE SELF-INTEREST AND INDUCED SIMILARITY/DISSIMILARITY ON OPINION CHANGE, CREDIBILITY, AND LIKABILITY

by

Harry S. Dennis, III.

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EFFECTS OF SOURCE SELF-INTEREST AND INDUCED SIMILARITY/DISSIMILARITY ON OPINION CHANGE, CREDIBILITY, AND LIKABILITY

Abstract

A laboratory experiment was designed to test the self-interest hypothesis, using videotaped presentations in a live audience setting. The self-interest hypothesis states that a source will increase his effectiveness if he argues in favor of a position that is opposed to his best interests. In the present study, sources (veterans) argued for and against their best interests under conditions of induced source-audience similarity and dissimilarity. Dependent measures consisted of an opinion instrument, several related measures of credibility, and an interpersonal attraction scale.

A total of 459 subjects, enrolled in a basic communication course, participated in various stages of the study. A Solomon Four-Group design constituted the primary data configuration strategy.

Strong opinion change main effects were obtained in support of the self-interest hypothesis, but not for source-audience similarity predictions. In terms of credibility and likability ratings, main effects were observed for source-audience similarity. There were no significant interactions.

The results were interpreted and integrated with previous research that has considered the self-interest and similarity source dimensions in isolation, but not in combination.

EFFECTS OF SOURCE SELF-INTEREST AND INDUCED SIMILARITY/DISSIMILARITY ON OPINION CHANGE, CREDIBILITY, AND LIKABILITY*

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The notion that a communicator will increase his effectiveness by advocating a position that is contrary to his best interests is intuitively appealing. Most audiences probably share the expectation that a speaker's communication is, to some degree, motivated by self-interests. Communicator martyrdom is simply not personified in the everyday rubric of verbal discourse. In fact, unless we can sensibly explain to ourselves why a communicator has elected to pursue such a self-effacing course--to speak against his best interests--we might suspect ulterior motives at play.

A growing body of research, however, testifies not only to the increased effectiveness of a source arguing against his best interests, but also to the increased effectiveness of a source whose prestige--in the abstract--is relatively low. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the self-interest phenomenon in a context that could be interpreted within an existing theoretical framework appropriate to the study of source effects.

In what was apparently the first empirical test of the self-interest hypothesis, Walster, Aronson, and Abrahams (1966), asserted that, "A communicator's effectiveness and credibility should depend both on his

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abstract credibility and on the unselfishness of his appeal (p. 327)." Two experiments were conducted, both of which exposed subjects to selfish and unselfish messages attributed to high and low credible sources. The first experiment partially confirmed the self-interest hypothesis; namely, the low credible source did increase his effectiveness when arguing against his best interests, but the high credible source seemed equally effective, regardless of the position taken on the issue. Further, the credibility of both sources was enhanced when they were arguing against their best interests. The second experiment found that both the high and low credible sources produced significantly greater attitude change and enhanced their credibility when arguing against their best interests.

Although the Walster et al., endeavor was ingeniously executed, there were several methodological and interpretive flaws, both in the design and conduct of their experiments. The most serious of these flaws rests with the subject population. The sample consisted of junior-high students who were asked to pass judgment on an issue that could not have been very relevant, meaningful, or salient to them--the issue, "how much power the courts should have." Furthermore, the second experiment utilized an unrealistic stimulus environment--the judicial system in Portugal--that must have been not only alien and foreign to the junior-high students, but would certainly impose a strain on the imagination of even more sophisticated subjects.

In their second experiment, Walster and associates found that when both high and low credible sources argued against their best interests, the greatest amount of attitude change ensued. An inspection of the means, however, upon which this conclusion was based, suggests a different interpretation. When the low credible source argued selfishly, the mean

attitude change reported was 6.54; but when he argued unselfishly, the mean attitude change was 4.79 (see Walster et al., 1966, Figure 2, Table 2, p. 339).[1] This difference in the low credibility condition clearly does not confirm the self-interest hypothesis and is completely ignored by the Walster group in their discussion of results.

Two other studies tested the self-interest hypothesis with different variations. Koeske and Crano (1968), devised a situation in which well-known personages (General William Westmoreland and Stokely Carmichael) allegedly made statements that were either congruous or incongruous with their known ideological positions. These investigators predicted that a statement would be more credible and believable if authored by an incongruous source, than it would be by an equally credible but congruous source.

The results indicated that statements paired with an incongruous source were, in fact, perceived to be more credible than those paired with a congruous source and, when there was no pairing at all, the incongruous statements were rated less credible. An unexpected finding was that while incongruous source-statement pairings increased message effectiveness, perceptions of the source's credibility were not similarly altered.

Thus, in a more fundamental and elemental stimulus environment, Koeske and Crano have extended the implications of the Walster group to account for the separate effects of the self-interest hypothesis on both the source and his message. With respect to the latter, their findings seem to support the notion that people will hold the cognition that a statement is true, if it is adopted by an unexpected advocate. Such reasoning, moreover, could plausibly account for the Walster et al., results, which occurred in a more complicated persuasive setting.

The third and final study that specifically tested the self-interest hypothesis was reported by Stone and Eswara (1969). They attempted to replicate the Walster et al, study, besides testing a new manipulation--source likability. Stone and Eswara's design differed from Walster's and her associates, however, in three significant respects. First, the same message was used in all conditions (in the Walster et al., study, there were two messages). Second, occupation (criminal lawyers versus TV journalists) was used to manipulate self-interest (Walster et al., used the message itself). Finally, credibility (source competence) was manipulated separately from occupation. Similar to Walster et al., the stimulus materials consisted of experimental booklets containing all manipulations, messages, and dependent measures.

These investigators failed to find attitude change in support of the self-interest hypothesis. Furthermore, no interaction between self-interest and credibility was observed. Stone and Eswara recognized, however, that the pre-message source credibility manipulation was probably washed out by the strong, unanticipated, "credible" effects of the message itself (the message was unlikely to have been communicated by a low credible source).

Although unpredicted, likability produced results in the direction that had been anticipated for expertness, and in a manner similar to that reported by the Walster group for their first experiment. The low likable source--arguing against his best interests--was significantly more effective than the low likable source arguing for his best interests. This effect was not observed for the high likable condition. In fact, a comparison of one of the two sources (the journalist) across each condition revealed that--using identical arguments--the low likable source arguing against his best interest was more effective than the high likable source arguing similarly.

In summary, there is some evidence to suggest that a source advocating a position against his best interest will be more effective than a source arguing for his best interest. Furthermore, when a source is paired with an incongruous message (which may or may not be contrary to his own personal self-interest), the statement will be perceived to be more credible than when it is paired with a congruous source-statement combination. Finally, low source likability may intervene to enhance the effectiveness of a source arguing unselfishly.

The modus operandi for the self-interest hypothesis remains a mystery. A source who argues against his best interest may be perceived as more honest, fair, objective and, hence, more believable than a source who does not. Likewise, the cognition that the existing evidence must have been incontrovertible to convince a source to argue against his best interests could also account for the effectiveness of this approach. The conceptual link common to these intuitive hunches, however, may reside with an important ingredient of potential source-audience (recipient) conguity that has been overlooked in self-interest research.

In a comprehensive review, Simons, Berkowitz, and Moyer (1970), developed a theory that incorporates source-audience similarity, bases for credibility, and attitude change. Central to their theory is the idea that ". . . various types of similarity and dissimilarity have differential effects on various credibility factors and that different components of credibility in turn have differential effects on message acceptance (p. 2)."[2]

Furthermore, a review of the separate literature on both similarity and credibility led Simons et al., to conclude that ". . . the relationship between similarity and image of the source appears to be strongest for those components least significantly related to attitude change (p. 9)." However,

the work of Brock (1965), Berscheid (1966), and Byrne et al. (1969),[3] clearly testifies to the potency of attitudinal similarities as determinants of attitude change. These same similarities, moreover, produce increased liking (attraction) for the source (Byrne, 1971).

Hence, while the cognitive components of credibility (expertise and knowledge) are apparently the most significant properties of the source that affect message acceptance,[4] the affective components are most instrumental in leading to perceptions of source-recipient (audience) similarities[5]--similarities whose basis depends upon belief, interest, or attitudinal congruence between the source and the recipient. Simons et al., acknowledged that while the relationship between perceived source similarity and attraction is fairly well established (c.f., "Law of Attraction," Byrne and Rhamey, 1965), little attention has been given to the issue of the relationship between attraction towards the source and attitude change. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research linking the similarity variable to other components of the source's image, such as honesty, objectivity, competence, etc.

Some closing remarks by Simons et al., suggested a research challenge which the present investigation attempted to meet:

> Rather than estimates of the relationship between similarity-dissimilarity and credibility in one study and estimates of the relationship between credibility and attitude change in another . . . data on both questions should be incorporated within one design and collected from the same subjects. (p. 13)

This study sought to provide a further test of the self-interest phenomenon and differed from previous research by: (a) attempting to link the self-interest hypothesis with the approach recommended by Simons et al., (b) introducing credibility and likability as dependent variables, and

(c) manipulating belief-similarity independently from source self-interest.

The following specific predictions were made:

FOR OPINION CHANGE

1. Main effects were predicted for both self-interest and belief-attitudinal similarity. A source arguing against his best interest should produce more opinion change than a source arguing for his self-interest. Likewise, a source who is perceived by the audience to share a relevant belief-attitudinal similarity should produce more opinion change than a dissimilar source (Walster et al., 1966; Koeske and Crano, 1968; Brock, 1965; Berscheid, 1966; and Byrne et al., 1969).

2. It was predicted that the most and least influential source, respectively, would be the similar source arguing unselfishly and the dissimilar source arguing selfishly.

FOR CREDIBILITY AND LIKABILITY

Because credibility and likability were treated here as dependent variables, their effects on message acceptance were approximated by their association with either the similarity or self-interest variables.

3. A source arguing against his best interests should be perceived as more competent, trustworthy, sincere--and as expressing greater conviction--than a source arguing for his best interests (Walster et al., 1966). Further, a "gestalt" rating of his credibility should be higher.

4. Perceived source-audience, belief-attitudinal similarity should affect perceptions of the source's trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity--more than ratings of the source's competence (Simons et al., 1970).

This fourth prediction indirectly tests the Simons et al., conclusion that similarity seems to affect those credibility components least related to attitude change.

5. Similar sources should receive higher likability ratings than dissimilar sources (Byrne, 1971), regardless of the selfish or unselfish position adopted by the source.

Method

DESIGN

A 2 X 2 X 2 ANOV, using the Solomon Four-Group Design, constituted

the principle configuration for the data analysis. Table 1 pictorializes the design and includes all treatment manipulations.

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Insert Table 1 here

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SUBJECTS

Students enrolled in the basic communication course served as subjects for the study. Approximately 460 subjects participated during the various portions of the research. Intact classes were randomly selected and assigned to treatments. Each treatment group was composed of two classes, whose class meetings were in the morning and afternoon, respectively. This arrangement was intended to counterbalance possible fatigue factors that could--because of time of testing--produce irrelevant response variance.

STIMULUS MATERIALS AND MANIPULATIONS

Self-interest condition. Thirty veterans were professionally videotaped in two conditions: In one condition, each spoke for one minute, arguing that veteran educational benefits should be increased; in the other condition, each argued for one minute that veteran educational benefits should not be increased. These two conditions constituted the two levels of the self-interest manipulation.

Independent raters (three graduate students in the Department of Communication) observed the videotapes and selected by consensus five veterans whose arguments and reasoning seemed to be superior to the rest; and whose argument quality appeared reasonably comparable from one speaking condition to the next, and within a given condition. The final stimulus, then, was composed of five veterans appearing in two conditions for one minute each. The five veterans unanimously argued either for or against an increase of veteran educational benefits.

The speaking situation for the veterans was arranged in an interview setting. The interviewer--who was not visible on the videotape--began the interview by asking, "Can you tell me about your position on veteran educational benefits?" The veteran then responded for one minute, directing his response to the interviewer. Although the veteran was given five minutes to prepare for each condition (time to reflect upon the issues he would raise), no notes or scripts were permitted for use in the interview. A split-screen technique was used so that the audience could view the speakers from two perspectives: one-half of the screen was a full shot of the speaker; one-quarter of the screen was a zoom, close-up of the speaker's head.[6]

Similarity condition. The basis for the similarity manipulation was derived from belief responses obtained from 124 subjects who did not function in any other capacity during the experiment. These subjects were asked to indicate their extent of agreement with seven belief statements, two of which were especially germane for this study:

(1) "It is important that a person stand up for his own beliefs, even if these beliefs do not represent a popular or majority point of view."

(2) "Part of having self-respect and integrity as an individual is being able to stand up for what one believes."

On a nine-point, Likert scale, the mean agreement for each of these items, respectively, was 7.89 and 7.78; indicating moderate to strong agreement with the statements.[7]

In the similar condition, preceding exposure to the treatment stimulus, each subject received a letter explaining the alleged purpose of the study. The letter was typed on official department stationery, signed by a prominent faculty member to increase the "credibility" of the message itself. The crucial similarity manipulation occurred in one paragraph and

was worded as follows:

> We would like your reactions to one such group--military veterans. To this end, we have asked five veterans (all students at Purdue) to discuss the issue of veteran benefits--specifically, veteran educational benefits. You should understand before you see the videotape that the vets may appear a little nervous or ill-at-ease. This is because none of them had ever appeared on TV before, and the cameras, lights, etc., probably made them nervous. Also, you should know that, like most of us, these vets believe in standing up for what a person thinks is right. In fact, we offered each of them a monetary incentive to appear before cameras for only one minute, but they all refused the money--arguing that a person should not have to be paid for speaking about something he really believes in.

In the dissimilar condition, subjects received an identical letter, but the underlined passage read:

> Furthermore, I should mention that, unlike most of us, they were very reluctant to speak up about their beliefs before others. In fact, we had to guarantee them a monetary incentive before they would agree to do this.

These written instructions were supplemented by a standardized oral format followed by the E. The oral instructions essentially repeated the written message.

After the similarity/dissimilarity manipulation was completed, the subjects were cautioned not to converse with one another until the entire exercise had terminated. The videotapes were then shown, followed by post-test measurement. Finally, the E delivered a debriefing and answered questions regarding the study (Subjects who recognized any of the speakers were eliminated from the analysis of the results).

QUESTIONNAIRE MATERIALS

Pretest measure. O_2 and O_4 groups (see Table 1) responded one week before scheduled treatment administration to a disguised opinion measure. Subjects indicated their extent of agreement with the following item on a nine-point scale ("1" indicating strong disagreement; "9" indicating strong agreement): "Veteran educational benefits should be increased to help

finance the increasing cost of an education today." This was the critical opinion statement that also appeared on the posttest.

Posttest measures. O_2 and O_5 groups completed an instrument package containing three dependent measures: opinions, credibility, and liking. To prevent the possibility that ratings of opinions would affect ratings of credibility and vice versa, the order of scale presentation was counterbalanced across groups within each treatment. The opinion measure and likability scale were always administered together.

The opinion measure was identical to the pretest item, except that it was imbedded in several other irrelevant items.

The credibility measure consisted of five items: (a) a "Gestalt" measure of credibility, (b) trustworthiness, (c) competence, (d) conviction, and (e) sincerity. In each case, a nine-point scale was used to assess responses. The scale positions corresponded to--for example--"not at all credible"--(1) through "extremely credible"--(9).

The liking instrument represented a modification of Byrne's two-item attraction measure (Byrne and Nelson, 1965). Whereas the Byrne scale states, for example, "I feel that I would probably like this person very much," it was modified for this study to read, "I feel that I would probably like these individuals very much." The items have a reported split-half reliability of .85; the attraction score is obtained typically by summing across the two items. The seven scale positions yield a possible range of 2 - 14 per subject.

The O_4 and O_6 control groups responded to the same opinion measure that was administered on the pretest. A separate control group (n = 36) also completed the credibility instrument; however, they were instructed to assume that they had just seen a videotape of five military veterans discussing the issue of veteran educational benefits for one minute each.

MANIPULATION CHECK

Four separate groups were used for the manipulation check. Two groups heard the veterans speaking in one condition or the other and, with no other information given, rated the veterans on: (a) the quality of their reasoning, (b) how logical or cogent the veterans appeared to be in presenting their points of view, (c) the overall quality of argumentation, and (d) the overall effectiveness of the presentations. The subjects were cautioned to respond to the group as a whole, and not to any one individual. This evaluation was designed to insure that message quality did not vary significantly in either the for or against self-interest condition--such variation, if any, could confound interpretation of results.

Two other groups were used to confirm that: (a) the sources were perceived to be arguing either for or against their best interests, and (b) the similarity/dissimilarity manipulations did produce perceptions of similitude or dissimilitude by the audience to a belief dimension allegedly shared by the speakers. These groups were also asked to identify anything about the pre-stimulus instructions (written or oral) that made them suspicious about the procedure or the E.

Results

MANIPULATION CHECK

Argument comparability. Since the five veterans did not deliver the same message in each condition, it was necessary to demonstrate that the two conditions were perceived to be similar in terms of the reasoning used, logic, quality of argumentation, and overall effectiveness. Table 2 reports the results of this analysis.

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Insert Table 2 here

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No significant differences were observed between conditions for each of the four questions bearing on the argument comparability issue.[8] The means depicted reflect responses to nine-point items, scaled from very little or none of the quality in question to a great amount of that quality.

Similarity and self-interest manipulation. Table 3 shows differences between groups for each of the questions pertinent to the similarity and self-interest manipulations.

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Insert Table 3 here
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For question two, subjects were asked to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with the following item: "These five veterans would probably feel, as most people do, that it is important for a person to stand up for his own beliefs, even if these beliefs do not represent a popular or majority point of view." Responses could range from (1)--very intensely disagree--to (9)--very intensely agree. The results indicate that the subjects receiving the dissimilarity manipulation perceived that the veterans would be less likely to endorse this item, than those subjects who were exposed to the similarity manipulation ($p < .05$).

The mean difference observed for question six--scaled similarly to question two--confirms that the similarity/dissimilarity manipulation was substantially effective ($p < .01$)--even with a belief referant somewhat more abstract than that suggested in question two. Question six asserted, "In general, after hearing the introductions and then the five veterans, in terms of beliefs and interests, how similar do you perceive that you are compared to them?"

To determine if the veterans were perceived to be arguing for or against their best interests, question one asked the subjects to identify

what position the veterans had taken regarding veteran educational benefits, and question three asked if the veterans appeared to be arguing for or against the best interests of the veterans as a whole. The results indicate that the manipulations were perceived as intended.

Lastly, subjects were asked (a) if any one of the veterans seemed more impressive than the others, and (b) if either the written or verbal instructions preceding the exercise made them suspicious of what followed. Over 85% of the responses to both of these questions were negative. A few remarks were made regarding the purpose of the letter of introduction (in lieu of the accompanying verbal remarks made by the E), and three subjects commented about the physical appearance of the veterans, e.g., hair length and dress. These remarks were judged innocuous for the purposes of the study.

PREDICTIONS

Opinion change. Main effects were predicted for both self-interest and belief-attitudinal similarity. Table 4 reports the posttest means and cell sizes for each group represented in all subsequent analyses.

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The results of the 2 X 2 X 2 ANOV applied to the Solomon Four-Group configuration are depicted in Table 5.

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Significant main effects were observed for speaker self-interest ($p < .001$); however, an unexpected pretest main effect occurred ($p < .05$). Since the pre- and no pretest control groups did not show a corresponding difference (pretested control $\bar{X} = 6.73$; non-pretested control $\bar{X} = 6.39$), thus negating the possibility of history, maturation, or instrumentation

contaminating the posttest measure (Campbell and Stanley, 1971), it was concluded that pretesting interacted with treatment effectiveness. An inspection of the pretest groups' opinion means reported in Table 4, moreover, indicates that the pretest effect was greatest for those groups in the against self-interest condition. In this case, the lower means (4.67 and 4.84, respectively) signify that the effect of pretesting was actually associated with increased speaker effectiveness.

The post opinion scores were recast in a 2 X 2 matrix, using those groups which were not pretested.

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Insert Table 6 here

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This analysis, summarized in Table 6, confirms the strong effect previously found for speaker self-interest ($p < .001$). However, the predicted main effect for similarity and the interaction between similarity and self-interest did not emerge. The results of this analysis indicate that the self-interest manipulation differentially affected posttest opinion responses. To determine of the against self-interest treatment actually produced more opinion change than the for self-interest treatment, some measure of estimated change was necessary. Following a technique recommended by Edwards (1954), gain scores were derived by summing across all pretest scores for the entire sample. A sample pretest mean (6.62) was then computed. Using a homogeneity of variance test described by Walker and Lev (1953), which includes an adjustment for unequal n's, a ratio of the largest pretest opinion variance to the smallest variance was calculated (five groups, including the opinion control, were included in this analysis). The resulting F_{max} (1.81) was not significant at $p < .05$ (Table value = 2.78). Furthermore, the largest mean difference equaled .38. Because both homogeneity and between-group criteria were met,

the overall pretest mean (6.62) was used as a base to estimate gains in the posttest only groups. In the for self-interest condition, a subject registered a gain if his score was greater than 6.62; in the against self-interest condition, a score less than 6.62 was entered as a gain. Table 7 summarizes this analysis.

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Insert Table 7 here
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Once again a self-interest main effect was observed ($p < .02$). An inspection of the gain scores shows that the against self-interest condition was associated with significantly more opinion change than the for self-interest condition.[9]

The final step in testing the opinion change prediction involved a comparison of each treatment group with the opinion control. A check on the variances of the O_4 and O_6 opinion control group yielded an F_{max} equal to 2.07, which was not significant at $p < .05$ ($k = 2$, $n = 30$; table value = 2.78). Further, a t test applied to the differences between means yielded a t equal to .88 ($df = 61$). Hence, the two control groups were combined for purposes of the ANOV comparison. Table 8 contains the results of the ANOV and Newman-Keuls test used in this analysis.

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Insert Table 8 here
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As expected, the against self-interest treatment differed significantly from the control ($p < .01$). This was true regardless of the similarity/dissimilarity condition.

Thus, the predictions for opinion change were partially supported. Sources arguing against their best interests produced significantly more opinion change than sources arguing for their best interests. However,

induced source-audience similarity or dissimilarity did not significantly enhance or depreciate the self-interest effect.

Credibility. It was predicted that a source arguing against his best interest should receive higher ratings on the five credibility dependent measures than a source arguing for his best interest. Furthermore, it was expected that source-audience, belief-attitudinal similarity should affect perceptions of the source's trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity--more than perceptions of the source's competence.

Table 9 presents the cell means obtained for "Gestalt" credibility, trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity. The means for perceived competence are not reported since the ANOV applied to this variable revealed no significant main effect for either source self-interest or similarity/dissimilarity and no significant interaction.

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Insert Table 9 here
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The ANOV applied to the "Gestalt" credibility scores yielded a significant similarity main effect and no significant interaction ($F = 3.88$; $df = 1, 233$; $p < .05$). An inspection of the means reported in Table 9 indicates that subjects who received the similarity manipulation rated the veterans significantly higher in "Gestalt" credibility, than the subjects who received the dissimilarity manipulation.

A significant similarity main effect (no significant interaction) was obtained for source trustworthiness ($F = 5.42$; $df = 1, 233$; $p < .02$). Again, subjects exposed to the dissimilarity manipulation rated the veterans significantly lower on trustworthiness (see Table 9).

Perceptions of the extent of conviction exhibited by the veterans were also significantly higher for subjects who received the similarity manipulation

($F = 9.50$; $df = 1, 233$; $p < .003$). As with "Gestalt" credibility and trustworthiness, the amount of perceived conviction was unaffected by the position advocated by the veterans--either for or against their best interest.

Finally, the last component, perceived source sincerity, was also associated with a similarity main effect ($F = 8.63$; $df = 1, 233$; $p < .004$). Subjects exposed to the similarity manipulation felt that the veterans were more sincere than those exposed to the dissimilarity treatment. Again, no self-interest main effect or interaction was observed.

In summary, perceived "Gestalt" credibility, trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity were all associated with similarity main effects. Perceptions of source competence were not affected by any of the manipulations. An important question remains. Did the treatments result in higher or lower credibility ratings than ratings assigned by a control group which was instructed to imagine just hearing five veterans discuss the issue of veteran educational benefits (control group means are reported in Table 9)?

To answer this question, one-way ANOV's were calculated for each of the five credibility dependent measures and the control group's response to each of these measures. Table 10 reports the results of this analysis.

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Insert Table 10 here
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Significant F's were obtained for "Gestalt" credibility, trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity--but not for competence. Table 11 summarizes the Newman-Keuls tests that were applied to the mean differences between each of the four credibility measures and their respective control group scores--within each treatment condition.

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Insert Table 11 here
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Only two of the credibility dependent measures, "Gestalt" credibility and trustworthiness, were associated with ratings by the treatment groups that were significantly different from ratings given by the control group. Subjects who had received the similarity treatments perceived the sources significantly higher in "Gestalt" credibility ($p < .01$), regardless of the self-interest manipulation, than did the control group (see Table 9). For trustworthiness, all four treatment groups perceived the sources to be significantly more trustworthy than control subjects who were asked to imagine how trustworthy the veterans would be ($p < .01$).

The Newman-Keuls test did not detect any significant differences between conviction and sincerity ratings in each treatment condition and their respective control group ratings. This result was surprising, since the ANOV reported in Table 10 indicated significant F's for both of these dependent measures. A partial explanation for this unexpected finding may rest with the comparative nature of the Newman-Keuls test itself (Winer, 1971). At any rate, the investigator elected not to engage in any further data snooping, by resorting to a less conservative procedure.

Source likability. Main effects were predicted for source similarity, but not for source self-interest. The ANOV calculated for likability comparisons was based on the subjects' attraction scores, following Byrne's (1971) procedure of summing across the two likability items that comprise the scale. However, in the present study, inter-item correlations were also computed and the following results were obtained: (a) item one (liking for the sources) correlated with item two (desire to work with the sources on a project) .51 ($n = 237$; $p < .001$); using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula, the resulting reliability coefficient was .68, and (b) each item (liking and working) correlated, respectively, .85 and .89 with the total scores. Thus, desire

to "work with the sources on some project," apparently accounted for most of the variance in the likability results.[10] The results of using the total likability scores are summarized in Table 12.

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Insert Table 12 here
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The prediction that the similarity treatment would be associated with higher likability scores than the self-interest manipulations was confirmed ($p < .01$). Further, there was no significant interaction.

Discussion

Several procedural innovations reported in this study need to be explained. First, unlike previous efforts to test the self-interest hypothesis, where the use of written stimulus materials constituted the chief method of experimental manipulation, this study undertook a certain risk by using live speakers to communicate messages that were not identical across treatments. Unquestionably, some experimental control was forfeited as a result of this procedure. However, in the opinion of the investigator, the gains far exceeded the losses, because the subject audience was exposed to a speaking environment more likely to approximate conditions in natural settings. Too frequently, previous source effects research has been accomplished in highly improbable, if not artificial, communication environments.

Second, by using veterans to discuss the issue of veteran educational benefits, the stimulus environment, hopefully, was made more believable and realistic for the subjects. It was thought that the speaker's relationship to his message (his degree of commitment and reason for advocating the proposition) should be an important consideration for an adequate test of the self-interest hypothesis. By using veterans this objective was not only achieved, but a more stringent test of the self-interest hypothesis was permitted.

In the for self-interest condition, the veterans were arguing for a proposition that they personally supported and to which they had expressed a high degree of commitment. In the against self-interest condition, however, the veterans were arguing in favor of a position that they personally did not endorse--yet more opinion change was associated with the latter and not the former position. Hence, it might be argued that when a source advocates a position against his best interests--and to which he is personally committed--his effectiveness will be greater than that observed in the present study. This hypothesis, of course, remains to be tested.

Third, the sample size employed in this study permitted the use of the Solomon Four-Group design, which has a number of advantages from the standpoint of both internal and external validity (Campbell and Stanley, 1971). Most importantly, however, an effect for pretesting was detected, which indicated that pretested groups responded more favorably to the self-interest manipulation than did nonpretested groups. This finding is particularly interesting since Lana (1959a, 1959b) and Lana and King (1960) have suggested that pretesting has minimal sensitizing effects in most cases. Further, in those instances where the effect has been observed, it has apparently dampened treatment effectiveness (Solomon, 1949; Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield, 1949). The value of isolating the pretest effect in the present research is that previous self-interest studies employing before-after designs have not controlled for pretest sensitization (cf. Walster et al., 1966; and Stone and Eswara, 1969).

Along with these innovations in the study of the self-interest hypothesis some liabilities were incurred that deserve mentioning. First, the Solomon Four-Group design is most powerful when individuals, not groups, are assigned randomly to treatment conditions. Logistically, this procedure

was impossible to accomplish; and, although cell variances were found to be homogeneous, Type G (group) errors may have weakened the overall test of the predictions (see Lindquist, 1953).

Second, one-item scales (with the exception of likability) were used to measure opinion and credibility variance. Measurement reliability is usually sacrificed with one-item scales, besides a potential loss of measurement sensitivity. Unfortunately, administrative requirements dictated against using a more sophisticated opinion and credibility package. Even with this limitation, however, the significance reached in most of the comparisons suggests that this problem is not prohibitive for the purposes of this study.

Third, the results of this study must be limited to those situations where the source's persuasive intent is not clearly aimed at influencing audience opinion. Some studies have demonstrated that when persuasive intent is not manifest, the source is more effective; likewise, some research suggests that under certain conditions, persuasive intent made manifest to the audience results in increased source effectiveness (McGuire, 1969).

In the present investigation, something akin to an "overheard" communication situation (Walster and Festinger, 1962), was approximated. The veterans were cast in an interview setting, and their remarks were directed to the interviewer--not an audience. Hence, it is doubtful that the audience perceived that the veterans were actually trying to engage in a persuasive exercise.

The "overheard" property of the present study further strengthened the self-interest results. Brock and Becker (1965), replicated the Walster and Festinger "overheard" condition and found that its effectiveness could be attributed to the fact that the communication was not counterattitudinal; when the message was counter to existing attitudes, the "overheard"

communication was no more effective than a communication where persuasive intent was made evident. Since the pretest of opinions in the present investigation indicated that the subjects generally favored increasing veteran benefits--from an "overheard" standpoint, the for self-interest condition should have been more effective than the against self-interest condition, since the latter treatment was basically counterattitudinal.

The opinion change results in this study rather convincingly demonstrate that sources arguing against their best interests gain greater support for their positions than sources arguing selfishly. Unfortunately, the predictions pertaining to source-audience similarity are not so unequivocal.

The basis for source-audience similarity used in this study did not increase or decrease the sources' overall effectiveness as had been predicted. However, some support was found for the Simons et al., (1970), observation that the relationship between source components and perceived source similarity appears to be strongest for those credibility dimensions least related to attitude change (Competence has been the dimension previous research has shown to be the greatest determinant of attitude change). This conclusion follows because: (a) In the present study, source effectiveness was **not** contingent upon source-audience similarity, but (b) source-audience similarity was associated with higher ratings of "Gestalt" credibility, trustworthiness, conviction, and sincerity, therefore (c) conditions of similarity--while advantageous to increasing perceptions of the source's image--were not instrumental in effecting acceptance of the source's message.

Furthermore, the one credibility component that should have been linked with source effectiveness (according to Simons et al., 1970)--perceived competence--was not affected by either the similarity or self-interest manipulations. Perhaps the nature of the issue in this study (and the advocates of

the issue) militated against the emergence of perceived competence as a significant dimension. Further research should consider the issue of the saliency of the credibility component as it applies to the particular communication situation.

In other words, the results of this study would suggest that unqualified acceptance of the tenet that perceived source-audience similarity leads to message acceptance may be erroneous. In certain communication situations, such as when a source is arguing against his best interests, the effect of an attempt to alter perceptions of similarity (between the source and the audience) may result in the enhancement of the source's image, with no concomitant alteration in the audience's response to the proposition being advocated by the source.

These remarks are proffered cautiously, however, for the following reason. The manipulation of source-audience similarity was accomplished by an acute manipulation. Byrne (1971) has shown, however, that source similarity operates analogously to a reinforcement gradient: as the number of perceived similarities increases, attraction increases and, in some cases, overall source effectiveness increases. The present investigation did not meet requirements for an adequate test of this similarity property (which has been tested previously in dyadic situations). Further, the need to base the similarity on a universal appeal, appropriate to the entire sample, limited the extent to which a relevant attitudinal similarity could be selected as a basis for the similarity manipulation. The similarity manipulation used in this study may have been perceived by the audience as a "guts" versus "no guts" issue and, hence, may have strayed from the mark originally intended by Simons et al., (1970), in their discussion of relevant attitudinal similarities.

The results for likability clearly support previous findings. Subjects receiving the similarity manipulation rated the veterans significantly more

attractive than subjects receiving the dissimilarity manipulation. Liking was not related, however, to acceptance of the source's message. From a balance model perspective (e.g. Heider, 1946, 1958), when liking is relevant and salient to the relationship with the source, then source attraction may be a more potent catalyst for attitude change (changing one's attitude toward the object of discrepancy to restore balance is less traumatic than altering one's perception of the source). The liking results are also suggestive that the similarity manipulations were perceived as intended, since the "similarity leads to liking" conclusion has been fairly well documented by previous research (Byrne, 1971).

What steps should be taken in succeeding research? The interesting issues raised by Simons et al., (1970), have yet to be answered. Specifically, under what conditions does source-audience similarity differentially affect perceptions of the source's image, which, in turn, differentially affect acceptance of the source's propositions? What makes the Simons et al. formulation particularly intriguing is the fact that credibility--as a source effect--is conceptually relegated (potentially) as a not-so-important or instrumental determinant of message effectiveness in persuasive discourse. The findings of this investigation allude to this possibility.

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Footnotes

1. The largest mean reflects the most amount of attitude change. Change scores were used to measure effectiveness.

2. Simons et al., (1970), dissect credibility into two main components: cognitive and affective. The former includes respect factors (e.g., expertise, knowledge), and the latter, attraction factors (e.g., likability, friendliness). They presume that both factors combine to affect the source's trustworthiness, i.e., his sincerity, reliability, and fairness. See Giffin (1967).

3. Also see Stotland, Zander, and Natsoulas (1961); Burnstein, Stotland, and Zander (1961); Stotland and Patchen (1961); and Mills and Jellison (1968). These investigators have studied the similarity variable primarily in non-persuasive settings.

4. Andersen and Clevenger's (1963) review documents this assertion. And Simons et al., (1970), concluded that "there seems to be a weak but positive relationship between attitudinal similarity and the factors of respect and trust . . . .(p. 7)"

5. Simons et al., (1970), distinguished between membership-group and relevant versus irrelevant attitudinal similarities. Their review advances propositions concerning each of these similarities. Membership-group can also include one's reference groups; irrelevant similarities are those similarities that are not germane to the proposition being advocated.

6. The video special-effects were recorded for use in another study currently in progress.

7. It was recognized that the basis for the similarity was not explicitly related to the proposition being advocated (a requirement specified by Simons et al., 1970, for relevant attitudinal similarity). The intent, however, was to select a dimension that was indirectly related and had universal appeal. Considering the nature of the message (veteran benefits) and the special qualifications of the sources (veterans), in the opinion of the investigator, this characteristic of belief statements was adequately approximated.

8. Level of significance for all analyses was established at $p < .05$. Computer programs used were derived from Winer (1971).

9. Since the amount of potential change on the nine-point scale was not comparable between groups, a second ANOV was performed and all extreme scores in the against condition were dropped. The results were unchanged.

10. This conclusion was verified by separate 2 X 2 analyses performed for each of the liking items. The first item, "likability for the sources," produced no significance; the second item, however, showed a strong similarity main effect ($p < .01$).

Table 1

Pictorialization of Design

	A_1 For Self-Interest		A_2 Against Self-Interest		Control	
	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2
B_1	(O_2)	(O_5)	(O_2)	(O_5)	(O_4)	(O_6)
B_2	(O_2)	(O_5)	(O_2)	(O_5)		

Note.--B_1 = source-audience similarity, B_2 = source-audience dissimilarity; C_1 = pretest, C_2 = no pretest.

Table 2

Message Comparability Between Speaker Conditions

Question	"A" Condition $\bar{X}$	"F" Condition $\bar{X}$	SEM	t
1. Reasoning	5.85	6.06	.48	.44
2. Logic	5.77	6.59	.58	1.40
3. Quality	5.85	6.47	.54	1.15
4. Effectiveness	6.46	6.23	.49	.47

Note.--n_1 = 13, n_2 = 17; at $p < .05$, Table Value = 1.70, df = 28. "A" Condition = against self-interest; "F" Condition = for self-interest

Table 3

Summary of Similarity and Self-Interest Manipulation Check

Questions	Similar Condition $\bar{X}$	Dissimilar Condition $\bar{X}$	SEM	t
SIMILARITY				
Question two	7.33	5.33	.68	2.37*
Question six	6.08	3.73	.68	2.79**
SELF-INTEREST	FOR	AGAINST		
Question one	100% (12)	93% (14)		
Question three	100% (12)	87% (13)		

Note.--$n_1 = 12$, $n_2 = 15$; $df = 25$
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 4

Posttest Opinion Means

	A_1 For Self-Interest		A_2 Against Self-Interest		Control	
	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2
B_1	$\bar{X}$ = 7.19 n = 26	$\bar{X}$ = 7.28 n = 32	$\bar{X}$ = 4.67 n = 28	$\bar{X}$ = 5.38 n = 29	$\bar{X}$ = 6.73 n = 30	$\bar{X}$ = 6.39 n = 33
B_2	$\bar{X}$ = 6.75 n = 24	$\bar{X}$ = 7.06 n = 33	$\bar{X}$ = 4.84 n = 32	$\bar{X}$ = 5.51 n = 33		

Note.--B_1 = source-audience similarity, B_2 = source-audience dissimilarity; C_1 = pretest, C_2 = no pretest

Table 5

2 X 2 X 2 ANOV of Posttest Opinion Scores

Source	df	MS	F
Self-Int. (A)	1	226.37	85.22**
Similarity (B)	1	.48	.18
Pretest (C)	1	11.48	4.32*
A X B	1	3.40	1.28
A X C	1	3.46	1.30
B X C	1	.13	<1
A X B X C	1	.23	<1
Error	229	2.66	

*$p < .05$; **$p < .001$

Table 6

2 X 2 ANOV for Opinion Differences Using
Posttest Groups Only

Source	df	MS	F
Self-Int. (A)	1	94.07	39.7**
Similarity (B)	1	.06	< 1
A X B	1	1.01	<1
Error	123	2.37	

MEANS	For Self-Interest	Against Self-Interest
Similar	7.28	5.38
Dissimilar	7.06	5.51

**p <.001

Table 7

2 X 2 ANOV Using Estimated Gain Scores For Nonpretested Groups

Source	df	MS	F
Self-Int. (A)	1	12.54	5.33**
Similarity (B)	1	.72	<1
A X B	1	.05	<1
Error	123	2.35	

MEANS (Gain)	For Self-Interest	Against Self-Interest
Similar	.64	1.23
Dissimilar	.45	1.12

Note.--Means indicate amount of change in direction advocated by source.
**p < .02

Table 8

One-Way ANOV and Newman-Keuls Test Applied
To Posttest Opinion Scores

Source	df	MS	F
Between	8	34.04	12.88**
Within	291	2.64	

Rank	C (comparison with control)	df	MS
(1) S.A.	1.18*	299	2.64
(2) D.A.	1.04*		
(3) S.F.	.73		
(4) D.F.	.50		

Note.--S = similar, D = dissimilar; A = against self-interest, F = for self-interest; C = control. Comparisons show mean differences.
**$p < .001$; *$p < .01$

Table 9

Cell Means Used in Credibility Predictions

Conditions	For Self-Interest				Against Self-Interest			
	Cred	Trust	Con	Sin	Cred	Trust	Con	Sin
Similar	6.34	6.33	6.53	7.12	6.35	6.68	6.75	7.39
Dissimilar	5.95	5.96	6.00	6.77	6.00	6.20	6.00	6.65

Control Group Means: (1) Cred = 5.33 (2) Trust = 5.14 (3) Con = 6.92 (4) Sin = 6.67 (n = 36)

Note.--Cred = "Gestalt" credibility, Trust = Trustworthiness, Con = Conviction, Sin = Sincerity.

Table 10

Summary of One-Way ANOV's Applied To Five Credibility Measures and Their Controls

Source	MS Between	MS Within	F
1. Credibility	9.02	2.02	4.45***
2. Trustworthiness	16.75	2.09	7.99***
3. Competence	2.30	1.72	1.33
4. Conviction	9.45	2.63	3.59**
5. Sincerity	5.48	2.14	2.56*

Note.--*df* for MS between = 4; for MS within = 268

***$p < .002$;**$p < .01$;*$p < .04$.

Table 11

Summary of Newman-Keuls Applied to Credibility Scores and Their Controls

Measure	MS	S.F.	S.A.	D.F.	D.A.
1. Credibility	2.03	1.01**	1.02**	.61	.68
2. Trust-worthiness	2.09	1.07**	1.55**	.92**	1.06**
3. Conviction	2.63	.38	.16	.92	.92
4. Sincerity	2.14	.45	.72	.10	.02

Note.--S = similar, D = dissimilar; F = for self-interest, A = against self-interest. df for each comparison = 268. Mean differences are reported.

**$p < .01$.

Table 12

2 X 2 ANOV For Likability

Source	df	MS	F
Self-Int. (A)	1	.18	1
Similarity (B)	1	22.07	5.91**
A X B	1	.15	1
Error	233	3.73	

Condition	For Self-Interest	Against Self-Interest
Similar	10.02	10.12
Dissimilar	9.46	9.46

Note.--Liking score for each subject was summed across two items, yielding a possible response range of 2 - 14 (max liking).
**$p < .01$